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houses' among the maize stalks, tying the stalks together to make conical shelters. There they played house, pretending to cook and pound. But the enthusiasm for these playhouses was shortlived, and on the whole the children and their nurse girls preferred to be in the village where they could see and hear what was going on. The older boys in this age-group seldom went to the playground, and pursued their games in the open spaces of the village. 857

The small girls had 'dolls' which they treated as little babies. Sometimes it was a maize cob tucked into a bit of cloth and carried on their backs. More realistic dolls were made of a bundle of reeds tied together with the hard round shell of a fruit fitted on top and painted with eyes, nose and mouth. Older girls made these dolls for the little ones, and showed them how to feed the doll from a tiny gourd and taught them lullabies to sing while they jogged the dolls on their back or nursed them on their lap. 524

Little boys had a wider range of toys, made for them by older brothers and quickly copied by the children themselves. They made windmills from maize sheaths which twisted on a stick as they ran. They had hoops of bamboo peelings, trundled with a notched stick, and a small round solid wooden wheel with a hole in it which they pushed with a long-handled crook. They had tops of wood and whipped them with lengths of bark rope. They were for ever collecting scraps of iron from wherever men were working. These they sharpened on stones, and used as knives, or bound them to a haft, as a little axe, with fragments of skin which they scrounged when a shield was being cut, or an ox flayed. The small boys were the tinkers of the village, collecting whatever scrap they thought they could use, and hiding it each in his own safe and secret place, and fighting savagely if anyone robbed a secret store. Many boys spent hours making clay figures, men, cattle, monkeys, dogs, and there were certain conventions which allowed little variety governing their style and shape. Sometimes they drew, or 'wrote' as they 857 857 532

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In the dry season which was the dancing season children from three and four years upwards spent hours watching the older boys and girls dancing. On the edge of the main group small boys particularly would with intense solemnity and exaggerated movements practise steps and postures, singing meanwhile. The Ngoni used no drums and no musical instruments in their dancing, and despised the users of drums. All their rhythm and synchrony was achieved by perfect unison of action and voice. The little boys practising solo on the edge of a dance-group listened intently every now and then to get the rhythm correctly, shifted their feet and stamped with the rest.

The little girls were collected together by older girls now and then, and sometimes joined by the boys, to play games of catch and various miming games such as choosing a lover, hen and chickens, slave-raiding, baboons in the maize garden. These were accompanied by songs in which the leader, or 'owner', of the game sang the story and the rest joined in the refrains. Many of these miming games called for alertness and co-operation, and the slow and solitary were soon shown up and laughed at. Another set of songs with refrains were ballads or stories without action, and these were listened to by the hour by the younger children towards the end of the day, especially if the singer of the ballad was a lively narrator.

Girl children of this age-group spent a lot of their time watching adults and older girls doing their household work. In time they learned to imitate the actions of pounding and grinding, using a small pole or a stone, of sweeping with a frayed-out stalk, of winnowing or sieving with a little basket, or ladling food with a tiny wooden spoon. When they went to the gardens with their mother, they were given a small branch to carry home on their heads for the fire. Later the little girls had a tiny pot put on their head, perched on a miniature grass carrying-ring and went to the water-hole with their nurse girl to fill it and carry it home without spilling the water.

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potatoes or ground-nuts. Round their fire when dusk came on, the boys who were under fourteen asked each other riddles. The children, for girls did it in their own groups too, called riddles 'our lovely sitting game', 'our lovely wise sayings for little children', 'our wise sayings which were puzzles'. The use of riddles and their enjoyment was confined to children between about seven and fourteen, never older, and was only a game for after dark, never played in daylight. About the age of fourteen they suddenly dropped them, and if asked about them said, 'Yes, we once played at riddles, when we were young'.

Here are a few from the vast number of riddles known to the Ngoni children:

The live thing have a dead thing and the dead thing have a live thing—the fowl and the egg.

A large garden reaped into the hands—a man's hair.

My mother's food is sweet and cool in the morning and the evening but hot at midday—the sun.

What is it that goes on four legs in the morning, on two at midday, and on three in the evening?—a man, who crawls on hands and knees in childhood, walks erect when grown, and with the aid of a stick in his old age.

The hut of my mother has no door—an egg.

The little birds drink at one well—the roof rafters which meet at the top.

The roof is leaky—a basket-work beer-strainer.

Sitting round in a circle so that they all faced inwards towards each other, the children flung these riddles into the group, sometimes expecting anyone to reply, sometimes pointing at one child and addressing the riddle to him: 'There, there. Listen.' They jeered at slow and inept replies, and applauded quickness and correct answers. It was clear that riddles were partly a test of intelligence and of memory, partly a play on words with a humorous twist in question and answer, and partly a test of alertness to catch the meaning

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528 of the riddle. An unexpected reply or a good guess often drew applause, even if it was not the accepted correct answer.

595 857 Before it was dark, all the herd-boys joined in what they called 'drill' on the flat space where they milked the cows in front of the kraal gate. As a rule this 'drill' was practising for the *ngoma* dance which took place after harvest and was the only dance for boys and girls approved by the Ngoni rulers. Sometimes they varied this dance, practising with swift follow-my-leader manœuvres, turning, twisting, lifting sticks, knocking knobkerries together, stamping, whistling. [534] As we have said already, the Ngoni had no drums, and all the precision and rhythm in any dances or concerted movements depended on exact timing and following the leader. The accuracy and precision reached was remarkable, and represented a high degree of intense concentration and co-operation among the dancers or 'drillers', who developed an almost intuitive knowledge of what the leader was going to do next. This dancing was practised in front of the men and older youths on purpose. They criticized it freely, and sometimes, though rarely, praised the boys. More often they came forward to show them how to do it better.

295 857 For the greater part of the day the herd-boys were with the cattle. They rose before it was light, undid the kraal gate, and as dawn broke led the cattle to the river. Then they went to the grazing grounds which according to the season were near or far from the village. As the dry season advanced and the grass became poorer, they had to go farther afield to find grazing. They returned to the village about ten o'clock [234] and milked the cows and took the milk in gourds to the senior women, keeping some as their own perquisite. The cattle were driven under some trees to rest during the heat of the day, and taken to the grazing ground again about two and brought back about five, watered and put in the kraal and the gate was closed. Variations in this time-table depended on the seasons, the quality of the pasture, and on whether the herd-boys went to school or not.

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20. Making lorries

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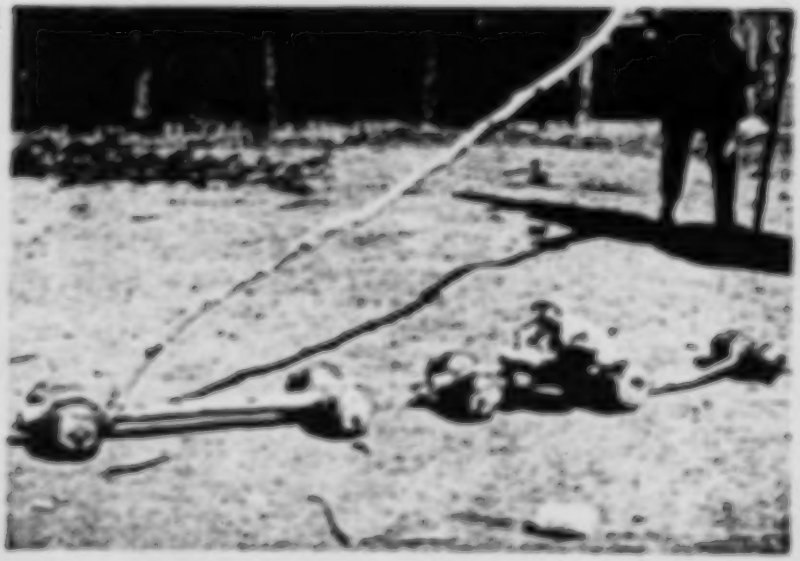

21. Will the wheels work?

[facing page 113]

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
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PLATE XIV

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b. Boys crushing ground-nuts. The expressed oil will be used in a bird trap

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a. Boy playing with a toy motor-car made from maize stalks

NGONI

[Facing P.209]

/8 cont'd/

385 the porridge inside warm. For straining beer, a special wide mesh basket is used, either conical or hemispherical in shape. Round and
[482] rectangular baskets of various sizes, with flat lids, are also found and are used for carrying small quantities of food on a journey.

415 In former times, wooden plates were used, but these are now very rare. Wooden spoons are still made and used, and large flat
417 porridge stirrers, with geometrical ornamentation, are common.
[531] Wooden hemispherical pats, with a handle, are used for smoothing cooked porridge.

417 At the back of the hut, or on the verandah outside, are the pestle and mortar used for reducing maize and other cereals to flour. Mortars range in height from one to four feet, the smaller mortars being used by children or for crushing ground-nuts. They are usually of about one foot in diameter, and are made from single blocks of wood, usually from Afzilia quanzensis or Monotes trees. The inside of the block is hollowed out to leave a receptacle for the maize that is nearly as deep as the mortar is high. The only decoration is
[531] a ridge of wood about an inch wide left encircling the base three or four inches from the ground. Pestles are undecorated cylinders of wood, made from Terminalia sericea or Kigelia pinnata trees. They may be as much as six feet long, and range in thickness from four
[534] inches down to the half-inch pestles used by young children playing at pounding.

The hard residue of maize that cannot be reduced to flour by pounding is ground between two stones, and these grinding stones are also kept in the hut. Not every woman has her own grindstones
[822] or her own pestle and mortar, and these objects are loaned and borrowed within the village.

Most huts contain some form of chair or stool, but these are
350 sometimes very small indeed, standing only two inches off the ground. Petrol boxes are used to sit on, and deck chairs, known in the vernacular as "sleeping chairs," are common. Carpenters make
[803] a small folding chair that is fairly common. European upright chairs, basket chairs and Morris chairs are sometimes seen, but these are not made locally.

/10 cont'd/

304 tribal mark and a hole made for individual ornamentation. Earrings,
[307] beads, and other ear ornaments are worn, including safety pins.
[308] Young girls from time to time make black rectangular marks on their
[309] cheeks by pressing on to them strips of nkhoiosa grass. These marks
[310] are quite black at first, and gradually lose their colour over a period of a year. Scarification of the face and body is carried out on both men and women for ornament as well as for medication, but there
[531] is very little regularity of pattern, save for the inverted crescent
[519] mark made between the eyebrows of women. This is the Nsenga tribal mark.

For dancing, most people wear their best clothes, and girls
535 and young women carry whistles on lanyards round their necks. When dancing ngoma, the most important tribal dance, miniature shields are carried, and a special type of knobbed stick that is held aloft. Less frequently seen are the wrist and ankle wrappings, and skin garments that used to be associated with this and other regimental dances. Nowadays, women's skirts and frocks are sometimes seen worn by men on such occasions.

Single-ended and double-ended drums are used as accompani-
534 ments to dancing, while boys play hand pianos. Girls play on a single string fiddle made from a reed. Whistles are bought from the stores. Old fashioned fiddles with gourd resonators are rare.

• 529 Boys spend much of their time making and playing with toys of various kinds. Animals, men, and motor cars are fashioned out of mud, while more elaborate motor cars are made from mealie stalks. A favourite toy consists of two wheels, up to six inches in diameter, on an axle with a handle some four or five feet long, terminated in another wheel of the same size. This construction, made of straw, representing the elements of a motor car, is pushed along by boys of ages four to ten.

The well-known game, involving four rows of twelve holes, with three stones in each hole, is played by men, usually in holes scooped out in the ground. A favourite game of girls and boys consists of throwing up beans with one hand and catching them again

/10 cont'd/

524 after moving other beams out of a hole. A boys' game played in the wet season is played with egg-shaped pieces of mud, with a small flange at one end. These pieces are thrown down on to the water, and ought to make an explosive noise.

/11/ VII

243 Maize, the main crop, is planted with the first steady rains in
[241] November, and is harvested soon after the end of the rains in April or May. Under the influence of the Agricultural Department of the
[243] Government, planting in small ridges following the contour is increasingly practised, but prior to the introduction of this and other new agricultural methods in the 1930s, planting was carried out in mounds about three feet in diameter and eighteen inches high. Finger millet is grown on patches of soil on which branches and garden
241 trash have been burnt. However, the citemene system, as known in other parts of the country, in which trees are felled over a wide area and burnt to fertilise a small area in the middle, is not practised as a principal method here. Finger millet is the only crop to be planted solely in ash fertilised patches, while the rest of the cleared ground may be planted with beans and nuts, and in the following season, with maize. Gardens last from two up to twenty or more years, depending on the type of soil, and the selection of a garden site is determined to some extent by the nature of the soil and of the vegetation growing on it.

244 In seepage areas, dry season gardens can be cultivated, and it is in such gardens, fenced in to keep out straying animals, that vegetables are grown for sale to Europeans and in the villages. These sites are also used for early planted maize, which is harvested in January and eaten in the form of green mealies. In the villages
[243] themselves, small plots of tobacco and castor oil are grown on old dung sites, while abandoned village sites are used as subsidiary gardens
245 for maize and other crops. Mango, banana, and pawpaw trees are found in villages and on the sites of abandoned villages.